

Workhuman Live Orlando 2026 Agenda

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Monday, April 27

Want to Improve your Organization? Make it Fearless

Amy Edmondson

Imagine a workplace where every employee feels safe to speak up, share ideas, and tackle challenges head-on – a fearless organization where innovation thrives and engagement soars.

In this unmissable keynote, Harvard Business School Professor and celebrated author Amy Edmondson brings her groundbreaking research to life, showing HR leaders how psychological safety can become the catalyst for organizational transformation.

Drawing on over two decades of insights and her acclaimed book, *The Fearless Organization*, Edmondson reveals how creating a culture of openness not only fosters collaboration and resilience but also delivers measurable performance gains – right down to the bottom line. You will leave equipped with actionable strategies to break down silos, ignite team potential, and tackle today's toughest challenges with confidence.

This session is your chance to learn from one of the world's foremost experts on workplace dynamics and gain the tools to build an organization ready to thrive in an unpredictable world.

Key Takeaways

- Actionable strategies to cultivate psychological safety, unlocking the creativity and innovation your workforce needs to excel.
- A roadmap for fearless leadership that drives collaboration, resilience, and measurable impact on employee engagement and organizational success

We've Lost the Plot: Navigating AI, Gen Z, and a New Reality of Work

Dr. Kelly Monahan

The world of work is fundamentally changing, and pretending otherwise is the biggest risk leaders face. AI is accelerating faster than organizations can adapt, Gen Z is challenging long-held assumptions about loyalty and success, and labor market shifts are exposing how outdated many of our leadership systems have become.

In this candid, research-backed session, Future of Work Expert Dr. Kelly Monahan approaches the AI-Gen Z conversation differently. Drawing on 15+ years of leading the future-of-work agenda in complex organizations, she uses real stories, data and observed leadership moments to explain not just what is changing but how we lost our way in the first place.

Rather than framing Gen Z as the problem to solve, this talk will help you understand what younger workers are reacting to, what's breaking beneath the surface of work, and how AI is amplifying long-standing system failures. You will leave better equipped to name reality, challenge outdated thinking, and lead the next generation with clarity, conviction, and courage.

Tuesday, April 28

The Human Signals Shaping the Next Era of Work

Eric Mosley

AI has flattened the workforce landscape even faster than expected. Tools, skills, and AI capabilities are converging, and yet execution gaps are widening. In this keynote, Workhuman Founder and CEO, Eric Mosley, argues that most organizations are rich in data but poor in signal, especially when it comes to understanding how work gets done, where leadership is emerging, and whether people are truly aligned around strategy. In a world where technical

capabilities are increasingly interchangeable, competitive differentiation has shifted to human contribution: collaboration, judgement, influence, and leadership in motion.

This talk challenges leaders to rethink what they measure, what they reward, and what they choose to notice – show how the future belongs to organizations that can detect human signals early and act on them deliberately.

Grit in the New Era of Work: Pursuing Resilience

Angela Duckworth

It was the core components of grit – courage, conscientiousness, perseverance, resilience, and passion – that shone through the acts of heroism we've witnessed through the crises of the last few years. We all cultivated our own resilience in the face of unprecedented challenges, whether moving to a hybrid model or battling economic uncertainty. Angela Duckworth's pioneering work on grit is a guiding light as we continue to grow in the new era of work.

How can we capitalize on the skills that helped us get through our recent challenges? And how should we address our renewed priorities, and pursue goals that serve our higher selves over the long-term? Drawing from her landmark research, Angela shows us how to adapt to a new way of living. This timely and practical presentation will help audiences recognize their inner fortitude, nurture their true potential, and prepare to flourish – not merely survive – in the face of whatever may be around the next bend.

From Data Rich to Decision Ready: The HR Skills That Turn People Data into Impact

Kalifa Oliver

HR has more people data than ever, but data alone does not drive better decisions, trust, or outcomes. In this interactive, 60-minute workshop - led by Dr. Kalifa Oliver, People Analytics Expert, and Author – you will move beyond dashboards and reports to focus on the core skills HR professionals need to translate people data into insight, influence, and action.

You will learn how to ask better questions of your data, connect insights to real business and human outcomes, and confidently use data to guide leaders without losing the people behind the numbers.

This session is designed for HR professionals who want to stop reporting and start leading with data.

Key Takeaways

- Identifying the critical skills HR needs to move from data collection to decision making including framing the right questions and interpreting insights with context
- Learning how to translate people data into clear, compelling stories that leaders can understand and act on
- Gaining practical strategies for using data ethically and responsibly while keeping trust, experience and humanity at the center

The Readiness Gap: Preparing People for an AI-Driven Future

Drew Goldstein & Holly Price

AI is changing the rules of work faster than ever before. Roles are evolving, workflows are being reinvented, and new skills are emerging almost overnight. Yet the organizations that will truly capture AI's potential won't be defined by technology alone - they'll be defined by how well their people adapt. In this session, we'll discuss how to build the culture, confidence, and leadership influence needed to help employees embrace change and succeed in a rapidly transforming workplace.

Designing the Workforce Playbook for 2026: How Humans, AI & Gig Talent Actually Work Together

James Killian & Tamar Cohen

The future workforce is already here. In this interactive workshop, future of work and leadership experts Tamar Cohen and James Killian will explore how to design an effective workplace that supports today's blended workforce - including full-time employees, consultants, and AI agents – drawing on their research and industry experience. As organizations evolve, AI and fractional talent are reshaping roles, accountability, and culture in meaningful ways.

They will introduce the five essential pillars of a scalable, modern workforce, with the session shaped in real time by what matters most to you and your fellow attendees, culminating in a practical, prioritized roadmap to being applying within your organization.

Key Takeaways

- Understand how AI and fractional talent are changing roles, accountability, and culture
- Learn the 5 essential pillars for a scalable, modern workforce
- Build a practical and prioritized roadmap to apply within your organization

Addressing Harm in the Workplace: Going Beyond Conflict Resolution

Serilda Summers-McGee

Typical conflict resolution processes, while well intentioned, almost always focus on finding the quickest solution to the issue so everyone involved can get back to work. However, those involved are often pressured to suppress their needs or true feelings to achieve compromises. Moreover, sensitive issues are glossed over to avoid further confrontation, difficult conversations, or to mitigate risk. Support for individuals in the conflict, tools for healing frayed relationships, guidance to help employees and managers avoid future conflicts – all of this and more is ignored.

In this session, Serilda Summers-McGee, Founder & CEO of Workplace Change and former CHRO for the City of Portland, will introduce harmony restoration, a process to resolve workplace issues while simultaneously acknowledging and supporting all individuals involved (even those tangentially) helping teams learn new ways of interacting and fostering a genuinely supporting and understanding workplace.

Key Takeaways

- How to uncover the actual root causes of workplace conflict
- How to defuse tense situations awhile acknowledging hurt and harm to individuals
- Tools to help organizations deescalate charges statements and spot biases and problematic dynamics early

The Psychology of Mistake Recovery: Building Trust Through Failure

John Baldino

How leaders respond to mistakes has a direct impact on trust, psychological safety, and team performance. In this interactive, 30-minute Skills Lab, you will explore the psychology behind mistake recovery and learn why leader responses matter more than the mistake itself.

You will be introduced to the TRUST Response Framework - a clear actionable, set of behaviors you can use when mistakes occur - and guided through short, real-world scenarios to practice applying it. You will leave with practical tools to respond to failure with accountability and empathy, strengthening trust and learning on your teams.

Key Takeaways

- Understand the psychology behind effective mistake recovery
- Learn the TRUST Response Framework for responding to failure
- Practice applying trust-building responses in real workplace scenarios
- Gain tools you can use immediately to support psychological safety

Succession Architecture™:

Designing Leadership Continuity Without Burnout or Chaos

Prudence Pitter

Succession planning is no longer a static HR exercise; it is an enterprise risk and resilience discipline. In this fast-paced, highly practical 30-minute Skills Lab, Prudence Pitter, HR strategist and leadership coach will teach you how to shift from replacement-based succession learning to Succession Architecture™, a future-focused approach that protects leadership continuity, prevents burnout, and sustains business performance.

Using simplified diagnostic framework, attendees will assess where their organization is most exposed; from “ready-now” gaps and fragile pipelines to overreliance on a few high performers. This session reframes succession as a leadership vitality and governance issue, versus a talent process, and introduces three critical pillars: continuity & risk, readiness & development, and governance & strategy.

Key Takeaways

- A clear understanding of the most common succession failure points
- A practical 90-day reset you can apply immediately, whether you’re building from scratch or strengthening an existing approach

Lessons for Leading Well When Life (and Work) Get Real

Latasha Gillespie

Leadership doesn’t break down in strategy sessions – it breaks down in moments of pressure, fatigue, fear, and change.

As HR and people leaders you spend your days holding space for others – navigating complexity, absorbing emotion, and carrying responsibility that is often invisible. But leadership is not sustainable when the giver is perpetually empty.

This session is an intentional pause– not to stop, but to rise renewed – an opportunity for you to refill your own cup so you can lead with clarity and strength.

In this engaging and deeply human presentation, Latasha Gillespie, former Head of Global DEIA at Amazon MGM Studios, Prime, and Freevee, shares hard-earned leadership lessons around resilience, clarity, rest, courage, and emotional intelligence – insights shaped by lived experience rather than theory. With warmth, humor, and honesty, you are invited to examine how authentic leadership – show up whole, not hardened – supports both personal well-being and organizational effectiveness.

You will explore how mindset, emotional contagion, celebration, healing and rest directly impact culture, performance, and the ability to lead people through ongoing change. This is not about doing more – it's about leading better, with intention, humanity, and sustainability.

Leading the AI-Enabled Enterprise: Putting People at the Center of Transformation

Ken Wechsler, Erika Oliver, Leylah Halima Macluf, Julie Stone

As AI accelerates across every part of the business, people leaders are being asked to guide their organizations through profound change, while ensuring the human experience stays at the heart of every decision. This conversation reframes AI transformation through a people-first lens: how to introduce new technologies in ways that strengthen trust, reduce uncertainty, and create conditions where employees feel informed, valued, and supported.

Leaders will share how they are shaping ethical and transparent practices, preparing their workforces with the skills and clarity needed for responsible adoption, and designing cultures where human judgment, empathy, and inclusion remain essential as AI tools scale.

Key Takeaways

- Ethical and responsible AI governance grounded in transparency and lived values
- Building trust and accountability as new technologies change work
- Leading change in ways that reduce friction and support psychological safety

- Recognizing people data and connection as the anchor of any AI strategy

Energizing the Modern Manager: Recognition Strategies that Strengthen Culture

Meisha-Ann Martin

After years of disruption, from the Great Resignation to quiet quitting, employees today are navigating an anxious, uncertain workplace. Engagement is wavering, and no group feels this strain more than managers, who are carrying unprecedented emotional and operational load, especially during rapid AI-driven transformation.

In this insight-packed session, Meisha-Ann Martin, PhD, shows how recognition can restore the energy, psychological safety, and connection managers need, and how manager engagement directly lifts employee engagement. Grounded in recognition data from real organizations, learn how valued managers create teams that are more resilient, committed, and engaged.

This session gives HR leaders simple, high-impact ways to help managers thrive, and in turn, help everyone else thrive too.

Key Takeaways

- Why manager engagement is the overlooked driver of today's employee experience
- The science behind how recognition energizes managers and strengthens team connection
- Practical steps to support managers and build cultures that fuel engagement

Connection is the Strategy

Jason Lauritsen

Connection is often treated as a cultural outcome. Something leaders hope will improve once strategy, structure, and execution are in place. The reality is simpler and more uncomfortable.

Connection is one of the main ways strategy actually turns into action. When connection is weak, execution slows and engagement suffers. When it is strong, people move with clarity and commitment.

Informed by original research inside organizations, this session goes beyond why connection matters and digs into how it actually works. Where do people experience connection at work? What strengthens it and what erodes it? And how does connection directly impact engagement, performance, and well-being? For leaders focused on results, the takeaway is simple. Culture and performance rise or fall based on the quality of connection within and to the organization.

Key Takeaways

- Understand how connection functions inside organizations and why it is a core driver of performance and strategic execution.
- Identify the leadership, cultural, and operational conditions that most strongly influence how people experience connection at work.
- Learn how the Connected Performance System, grounded in leadership clarity, organizational alignment, and performance enablement, helps leaders turn connection into a competitive advantage.

The Heartbeat of High Performance: The C.P.R. Framework for Building a Culture of Recognition That Drives Results

George Rogers

In an era defined by workforce fatigue, shifting expectations, and relentless performance pressure, organizations can no longer afford to treat recognition as a program or perk. In 2026, and beyond, the companies that win will be those that intentionally activate recognition as a leadership strategy, one that fuels culture, elevates performance, and strengthens retention.

In this session, George Rogers, Chief Strategy Officer at Lighthouse Research & Advisory, introduce the C.P.R. Framework - Culture, Performance, and Recognition – a practical, leadership-driven model for creating a recognition culture that moves the business forward. You

will learn how these three elements work together as a system, not in silos, and how recognition becomes the connective tissue that sustains engagement and accountability.

Through research-backed insights, real-world leadership examples, and clear application, this session will challenge you to rethink how recognition shows up in daily moments, performance conversations, and organizational priorities. You will leave with a renewed understanding of how intentional recognition reinforces values, drives discretionary effort, and creates environments where people want to stay, contribute, and succeed.

Key Takeaways

- **Culture:** Create the conditions to thrive - understand how consistent, values-based recognition strengthens trust, belonging, and psychological safety, laying the foundation for a culture that attracts and retains top talent.
- **Performance:** Reinforce what great looks like – learn how to align recognition with performance expectations, business goals, and key behaviors to drive clarity, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- **Recognition:** Make it strategic, not accidental – gain practical, scalable strategies you can use immediately to recognize in meaningful ways that resonate across generations and directly support organizational outcomes.

All the Difference: Turning Difference into Trust, Performance, and Value

Susan MacKenty Brady, Leslie C. Smith, Pete Church

Difference isn't theoretical. It shows up when decisions stall, tension goes unspoken, and capable leaders leave meetings frustrated, wondering why alignment feels harder than it should. In today's fast-moving, AI-accelerated environments, those moments are happening more often and costing more.

When leaders avoid difference or try to smooth it over, the impact is predictable: insight gets lost, trust erodes quietly, and execution suffers. Not because people aren't capable but because difference isn't being led.

Susan MacKenty Brady and Lieutenant General (ret.) Leslie C. Smith, two of the three authors of the forthcoming *All the Difference* (Harvard Business Review Press), join Point32Health Chief People and Culture Officer Peter Church, an executive featured in the book for a frank conversation about what it really takes to lead through difference when stakes are high.

Grounded in real leadership moments - not theory - this session offers an early look at a new leadership framework designed for pressure, complexity, and competing perspectives.

Key Takeaways

- A clear point of view: why leading through difference is now a make-or-break leadership capability
- Pattern recognition: the common missteps that derail trust and execution and how to interrupt them in real time
- Practical moves: six Target Actions leaders can use immediately to bridge perspectives, strengthen teams, and drive results

Aligning Recognition Strategy & Technology: Connecting Platform & Performance at Manulife

Melinda Drexler

Get an inside look at how Workhuman customer Manulife builds and scales its enterprise recognition ecosystem. In this session, Melinda Drexler, VP of Global People Comms Technology, will share the platform enablement perspective behind activating a company-wide recognition strategy, highlighting how the Workhuman platform fuels consistency, drives adoption, and supports continuous evolution across the organization.

Melinda will explore how Manulife's Podium program anchors a structured, year-round recognition calendar, delivers meaningful insights through reporting and analytics, and offers the flexibility required for programs to expand and adapt over time. The session will also emphasize the critical partnership between program owners and platform teams in turning recognition strategy into scalable, employee-centered experiences.

Key Takeaways

- Practical guidance for leveraging recognition to strengthen culture, advance inclusion, and align with broader HR and business priorities.

Using Culture to Power the AI Mindset: A People-First Playbook from Sanofi

Raj Verma

Sanofi is aiming to be the first pharma company to scale AI – but real success goes beyond tech. In this session, Raj Verma, Chief Culture, Inclusion & Employee Experience Officer, reveals how Sanofi is weaving culture, inclusion, and employee experience into its digital transformation to keep it human at heart. After a strategic company reset, Sanofi introduced many digital employee touchpoints as key drivers of change, including Bravo!—the company's recognition platform. Bravo! is becoming a powerful lever for driving culture change, building inclusion, and helping employees adopt new behaviors aligned with Sanofi's AI transformation goals. Raj will explore how recognition and culture design are supporting Sanofi's AI ambitions, and how HR leaders can lead similar efforts in their own organizations. He'll unpack how his team was designed to lead the people strategy through the lens of culture, inclusion, and experience, sharing lessons from policies, processes, and practices while offering actionable ideas for aligning transformation with what matters most to people.

This is a session about storytelling that makes everyone feel like the protagonist – because when people see themselves in the journey, transformation becomes personal.

Key Takeaways

- How creating the right employee experience cultivates values-based behaviors and drives strategic initiatives
- How Sanofi is using recognition to activate values and drive growth
- Why HR must co-lead on every digital journey
- A model for integrating culture, inclusion and employee experience into every digital touch point

Roles Over Jobs:

The Decentralization of Work and Skills-Based Progression

Leah Warwick & Brad Hartman

Most organizations are still running 2026 companies on industrial-era architecture—rigid job structures, siloed functions, and HR operating models built for a world that no longer exists. But a profound shift is underway: skills, data, and AI are transforming HR from a support function into the enterprise's central orchestrator of capability. This talk reframes the role of HR leaders, showing how the future of work demands not administrators of programs, but architects of how work actually flows across the business. Drawing on research from Gartner, Deloitte, and McKinsey, People Strategy Executive and Enterprise Systems Architect, Brad Hartman, explores why jobs are failing as the unit of analysis, why skills are becoming the new operating system, and how AI amplifies HR's ability to design dynamic, adaptive organizations.

To bring this shift to life, Brad shares the inside story of how he transformed his most recent biotech People Team from a traditional "jobs"-based HR department into a dynamic, cross-functional "roles-based" team with an agile operating system. Through a case study of dynamic teaming, human capital intelligence, and a plug-and-play operating rhythm—including dashboards, quarterly rocks, shared norms, and agile project deployment—attendees will see how HR can become the integrator of people, systems, and work. This section illustrates how a modern People Team can operate as a true enterprise orchestrator: reallocating resources in real time, aligning with operational priorities, enabling digital workflows, and creating the transparency and coordination required for speed and scale. The result is a model any HR leader can adapt to accelerate outcomes and elevate their strategic impact.

Unlocking the Human Advantage:

What new Research Reveals About Skills That Drive Performance

Isha Vicaria

What if the most critical skills for today's workforce are also the least visible? Join this session for an exclusive look at New Economy Skills research – a collaboration between Workhuman and the World Economic Forum – revealing why human-centric skills like creativity, resilience, collaboration and emotional intelligence are now the true drivers of performance in an AI-enabled world yet remain underrecognized in most organizations.

Drawing on global data and Workhuman's unique recognition insights, the research shows that while these skills are rarely named or rewarded, they are consistently the most valued when recognized by peers. This session will invite you to rethink recognition not just as a tool for engagement, but as a powerful mechanism for making human skills visible, valued, and developed at scale – unlocking the human advantage organizations need to thrive.

Secrets to Scaling Happy Teams

Nya James

As organizations grow, keeping employees engaged, connected, and motivated becomes increasingly complex. In this session, Nya James, HR Consultant from BambooHR, will reveal the secrets to scaling happy teams by focusing on four key pillars: listening, connection, clarity, and simplicity. You'll walk away with practical strategies to strengthen your culture, align work to purpose, and create an environment where employees feel seen, supported, and empowered at every stage of growth.

Key Takeaways

- Unlock the four pillars of team happiness – Learn how listening, connection, clarity and simplicity can become your secret weapons for scaling a strong, motivated workforce.

- Bridge growth with purpose – Discover practical strategies to align business growth with employee well-being – so people feel seen, supported, and inspired to do their best work.
- Simplify culture building as you scale – Walk away with actionable insights for preserving culture and boosting engagement – even as complexity increases with company growths

Safe Workplaces Save Lives:

The Employer Opportunity in Addressing Relationship Abuse

Sharisse Kimbro & Kate Nack

Join Kate Nack (Vice President) and Sharisse Kimbro (Program Officer) from The Allstate Foundation to learn how employers can make a lasting difference for domestic violence survivors. This session will draw upon survivors' lived experiences to explore how workplace programs and policies can promote safety, dignity, and long-term stability. You will be invited to join the Survivor Empowerment Network, a community of employers providing practical resources and support for building environments where survivors can heal and thrive.

Wednesday, April 29

Shatterproof: How to Thrive in a World of Constant Chaos (And Why Resilience Alone Isn't Enough)

Dr. Tasha Eurich

As an HR leader, you carry the emotional weight of leaders, employees, and executives – with little space to set it down. You're expected to steady the organization, so others don't burn out, even as demands on you escalate. While you work to build human-centered cultures, your own reserves may be quietly slipping away.

For decades, resilience has been framed as the antidote: bounce back, toughen up, keep going. But research by New York Times bestselling author and organizational psychologist Dr. Tasha Eurich reveals that resilience is a limited resource. In today's relentless world, even the most resilient leaders are hitting their ceiling just as pressure peaks.

What if there was a practice that didn't replace resilience, but complemented it? This session introduces becoming shatterproof – a science-backed roadmap for transforming chaos into clarity, capacity, and control.

Drawing on decades of scholarship, her five-year original research program, and a life-defining health crisis, Dr. Eurich reveals what shatterproof people do differently. Instead of powering through stress, they see it as a signal to deepen self-awareness – proactively pinpointing what needs to change before burnout or bad decisions take hold.

Key Takeaways

- Identify your unique stress triggers (and the limits of generic solutions)
- Surface the unmet human needs that drive overwork and burnout
- Interrupt self-limiting patterns, and replace them with clear priorities and purpose-fueling habits – without doing more

The Identity Crisis Nobody is Talking About - And Why It's Destroying Your AI Strategy

Abhijit Bhaduri

AI is transforming how work gets done – but behavioral science explains why people decide whether to trust it, resist it, or disengage. Most AI strategies fail not because people lack skills, but because systems strip away ownership, judgement, and meaning.

In this session, Abhijit Bhaduri, former Microsoft Partner who headed global learning and development, challenges the belief that AI disruption is a skills problem. Instead, he reveals an identity crisis at work – where people feel interchangeable, over-measured, and disconnected from purpose.

Drawing on behavioral science and real-world examples, you'll learn why "perfect" algorithms erode trust, why speed alone is the wrong goal for agentic AI, and how small, accountable teams can reclaim ownership in AI-augmented work.

This session isn't about managing talent more efficiently. It's about designing systems where humans feel indispensable.

Key Takeaways

- Reframe AI disruption as an identity challenge- not a skills gap- and understand why people disengage when work strips away ownership, judgement and meaning
- Redesign talent systems to counter algorithm aversion, rebuild trust in AI tools and ensure humans remain decisively "in the loop" through intentional strategic friction
- Shift HR's role from policy enforcer to identity architect – empowering small teams to act as internal micro-brands that own outcomes, accountability, and pride in AI-enabled work

"Hi" vs AI: The Brain Science of Human Connection in an Artificial World

Eric M. Bailey

AI is everywhere; quickly becoming a ubiquitous framework that permeates our conferences and conversations. But for as long as we have been engaging with and managing people, understanding the human experience has been the key differentiator. As AI and digital technology are increasingly occupying our communication channels, the ability to truly connect with people is increasingly important. Connecting with people more, not less, is the path to success. Let's explore the brain science of working isolation versus collaborative environments. Let's discover the real reason 84% of Americans are more frustrated and lonelier now than they were just a decade ago. Let's engage in a session that is designed by a human to help humans connect with humans.

How to Have Difficult Conversations and Actually Enjoy the Process

Jeff Harry

What is the most difficult conversation you need to have at work that you have been putting off? Imagine the weight lifted from your shoulders once it's finally over. Studies show that organizations prioritizing these tough discussions consistently thrive, fostering higher levels of trust and psychological safety.

In this interactive, play-based workshop, we will help you master high-stakes communication that you can apply as soon as you return to the office. We will dismantle the power dynamics you must address, the strategic preparation required, the Emotional Intelligence (EQ) you need to cultivate, and the follow-up necessary to ensure a successful outcome. Through play-based simulations, you will practice these hard conversations to somatically understand what it feels like to stay centered. This somatic play practice builds the "muscle memory" you need to remain calm and effective when it matters most. This hands-on, mind-on experience will push you outside your comfort zone, so the real-world discussion will feel easy in comparison.

Key Takeaways

- Navigate power dynamics to speak confidently across all levels
- Apply tactical EQ to stay centered under high pressure
- Build muscle memory for calm and effective difficult conversations

How to Change Culture in 20 Minutes or Less: Small System Shifts to Improve Well-Being, Motivation, and Performance

Jennifer Moss

We are in a new paradigm of work that is changing under the weight of rapid disruption, rising expectations, AI acceleration, and a growing loss of community and meaning which has led to

an unprecedented rise in burnout. The truth is the previous work systems we rely on are no longer designed for how people actually function today.

Grounded in behavioral science, neuroscience, and organizational research, and drawing on Jennifer Moss's award-winning books, *The Burnout Epidemic* and *Why Are We Here?*, this workshop shows how culture changes through small, practical design choices rather than large overhauls. Moss shares a wide range of evidence-based micro shifts, many that take twenty minutes or less, that both leaders and employees can apply immediately. Over time, these small system changes compound, restoring motivation, strengthening engagement, and rebuilding connection in environments where no one has time for a culture overhaul.

Key Takeaways

- How to identify where rapid change, AI pressure, and rising expectations are creating misalignment and burnout in everyday work systems, and what small design fixes reduce stress and friction.
- A set of evidence-based micro shifts, many under twenty minutes, that leaders and employees can apply immediately to restore motivation and strengthen engagement.
- How small system changes, repeated consistently, compound over time to rebuild connection and create sustainable culture change, without overhauls or new programs.

Think Like a Leader

David Marquet

Gallup's recent employee engagement poll reports worldwide only 13% of employees are engaged at work. For many of our people, the workday is something to be tolerated. Their daily objective is a negative one – to avoid errors, problems, and confrontations. As a result, they do not pull their full passion and intellect into their work.

Our mission is to change all that by creating empowering work environments that release the passion, initiative, and intellect of each person. This bold and highly effective leadership approach can be summarized as “give control, create leaders.” This is possible, but not with the current leadership paradigm. It will require us to think differently and be open so that people are encouraged to share their ideas and act on what they learn.

In this fast-paced and fun workshop, David Marquet, former nuclear submarine commander and leadership and organizational design expert, uses snippets from the movie “Master and Commander” to illustrate the negative impacts of traditional leader-follower model where people are motivated to avoid errors. This is contrasted with leader-leader organizations where people are motivated to achieve truly remarkable things.

Key Takeaways

- Create an environment where people actively engage and think
- Discover mechanisms to encourage questions and feedback
- Have a plan to give control, for pushing authority to where the information lives
- Have a personal commitment to talk with your co-workers in an empowering way
- Implement the idea of leadership as creating more leaders – not more followers
- Implement the idea of leadership as giving control – not taking control

Recognition Done Right: Turning Praise into Performance Data

Nuvs Jain

Join Workhuman Product Evangelist Navin “nuvs” Jain for a hands-on Skills Lab focused on crafting data-rich recognition awards that do more than celebrate achievements – they make critical skills visible. Rooted in Workhuman’s research-backed Recognition Done Right principles, this session will help you practice writing recognition that is frequent, specific, and meaningful, linking behaviors and outcomes to measurable impact. You will also explore how recognition data can surface authentic skills insights, support a skills-based organization strategy and enable leaders to recognize, develop, and act on the capabilities that drive performance.

Strategic Connection in Practice

Jason Lauritsen

Building on the original research presented in Tuesday's session, Connection is the Strategy, employee engagement expert, Jason Lauritsen, translates his key findings into concrete practices that strengthen workplace connection - and, in turn, execution, engagement and performance.

Organizational Readiness: A Practical Self-Assessment for Navigating Change

Kasara Weinrich

In this session, Kasara Weinrich, Senior Director of Transformation Readiness at ADP will guide you through a structured self-assessment of organizational readiness and complexity across four pillars: people, process, data, and technology/adoption. This interactive Skills Lab will help you pinpoint what is fueling momentum, where friction is occurring – and why – and what to prioritize next. Through peer benchmarking and candid discussion, you will leave with a clearer perspective and actionable, near-term steps to chart your transformation plan.

Key Takeaways

- Understand your organization's quadrant placement and its implications
- Identify priority actions across people, process, data and technology/adoption
- Leave with a practical 30-60-90-day roadmap of next steps

Resilience at Work:

Building Psychological Safety as a Core Belief System

Peter Danzig, Orien Barnes, Kamille Washington, Kim Scott

In a world of constant change, distributed teams, and increasing employee burnout, organizations can no longer rely on surface-level well-being initiatives. Resilience – both individual and organizational – can only thrive when workplaces cultivate psychological safety: the shared belief that people can speak up, take risks, and raise concerns, make mistakes, and be their authentic selves without fear of humiliation or retaliation.

This panel will explore how psychological safety is more than a practice or “program.” It is a belief system that shapes how employees interpret their environment, how teams function under pressure, and how leaders behave in moments of uncertainty. We will bring together practitioners and researchers who have successfully embedded psychological safety into everyday work, from team rituals to leadership behaviors to HR policy design.

You will walk away from this discussion with a new perspective on how to strengthen resilience at all levels of your organization.

The Great Many: Truly Human Leadership for a Brighter Tomorrow

Hamza Khan

The sun has set on the old leadership playbook—but the ghosts of paradigms past still haunt even the most forward-thinking workplaces: shareholder primacy, algorithmic management, the “The Great Man” myth, and the creed of fear and greed. We keep updating our tools without upgrading the default operating system of our organizations: the lone hero-leader, who is all too often tragically unskilled, unhealed, and unaligned with the reality of their people. Meanwhile, trust in institutions plummets, complexity outpaces command-and-control, and the most vital work is increasingly accomplished through decentralized networks. In the age ahead, we don’t

need a layer of better leaders to uphold the status quo—we need fundamentally reinvented, co-creative, rehumanizing workplaces that turn peoples’ light on—and keep them on.

In this imperative and interactive Shine session, human-centered leadership expert Hamza Khan will challenge you to think bigger by hitting fast-forward on the inevitable evolution of leadership: The Great Many. It’s a radical, whole-human approach where the status of leader and follower becomes perfectly equal; hierarchies flatten, ownership diffuses, decision-making decentralizes, and a unified identity emerges—Fellowship. And it’s not just “shared leadership” with a fresh label: Fellowship draws from an eclectic but grounded interdisciplinary tradition, spanning permaculture, Indigenous Knowledges, regenerative design principles, and more, to treat organizations like living ecosystems designed for long-term flourishing. The Great Many is built on three ecosystem laws: interdependence over extraction, reciprocity over transaction, and stewardship over ownership. This is how a brighter tomorrow draws from everyone’s light—not just the select few.

You’ll leave with three imperatives for the brighter world of work: Unlearn Theory X (retire domination as the default), Relearn Theory Y (restore dignity and autonomy without burning leaders out), and Embrace Theory Z—a forgotten third way built for all people, planet, and posterity. Through guided dialogues and a closing micro-commitment ritual, you’ll practice a simple technique you can use immediately: The Light Check—a quick and intuitive method for identifying where your culture dims people’s grit, hope, and creativity, and what you’ll change to help them shine bright.

Key Takeaways

- Describe with precision why The Great Man era is ending and define The Great Many (“Fellowship”) as the inevitable leadership paradigm for a human-centered future.
- Apply The Light Check to identify where culture, metrics, meetings, systems, and incentives—are turning people’s light out—and implement at least one corrective change immediately.
- Use three regenerative principles—interdependence, reciprocity, and stewardship—to build shared responsibility, trust, and decentralized decision-making without chaos.

Beyond the Buzzwords: Building a Culture that Delivers Results

Khalil Smith

What truly drives high performance in today's complex workplaces? Drawing on insights from The Performance Culture, Khalil Smith, leadership expert and VP of Inclusion, Diversity, and Engagement at Akamai Technologies, cuts through corporate buzzwords to focus on what actually delivers results. Blending research and real-world experience, he will share a practical framework for lowering the temperature on charged conversations while strengthening alignment, collaboration and performance.

The Superworker Organization: Transforming the Employee Experience with AI

Julia Bersin & Kathi Enderes

AI alone doesn't transform organizations—people do. As AI presents myriad opportunities to boost productivity and performance, the most successful organizations are those that put people at the center of their transformation efforts—with managers and HR leading the way. In this session, we will explore how companies put AI to use for good, reinvent jobs and roles, and the role of HR and management in the journey to empower employees to become "superworkers." Rather than chasing technical tools, it's all about making work better and more meaningful.

Key Takeaways

- The superworker opportunity: how AI enables every employee to become more productive, innovative, and successful in the right environment
- The foundations of an irresistible employee experience: why trust, communication, recognition, and growth matter now more than ever for achieving AI excellence
- The evolution of the people manager role: how the manager role is evolving to become a key AI change agent

- Examples of success: how HR teams are fostering frontline innovation and empowering employees to thrive in an AI-driven environment

Leading with Meaning: The Three C's of Work That Matters

Tamara Myles

What do the most meaningful workplaces have in common?

They're not always the ones with the biggest budgets. Or the flashiest perks. But they are consistently great at one thing: helping people feel that they belong, make a difference, and are growing. In other words – they're places where leaders pay attention to how work is experienced, not just what gets done. When that happens, performance, engagement, and retention follow.

In this session, researcher and author Tamara Myles shares insights from her original study at the University of Pennsylvania and decades of work with organizations around the world. She introduces the Three Cs of Meaningful Work – Community, Contribution, and Challenge – as a clear, memorable framework leaders can use to understand what people are hungry for at work and how to consistently deliver it.

Through memorable stories – from a lost stuffed animal at the Ritz-Carlton, to a hairstylist who becomes a “Daymaker,” to a quiet “You’re ready” that changes the course of someone’s career – she shows how everyday moments that matter change the way work feels and how people show up.

You will leave with a shared language for meaning at work and practical ways to make work more connected, more impactful, and more worthwhile.

Bridging the Generational Divide:

From Alpha to Boomers in the Age of Agentic AI

Hollie Castro

In a world where Gen Alpha is already coding before they can write cursive, and Boomers are still leading boardrooms, the modern workplace has never been more generationally diverse – more technologically complex. Add agentic AI to the mix – AI that doesn't just assist but takes initiative – and pressure on leadership to adapt multiplies.

In this proactive and insightful session, Hollie Castro, a 5x CHRO and people-first strategist, will explore how agentic AI is accelerating generational tensions and reshaping the employer-employee contract. She'll unpack what it means to lead in a world where AI tools are "thinking" independently, Gen Z is redefining loyalty, and Boomers are trying to keep pace with both. If you're leading people – or trying to retain them – you need to understand what's changing and what still matters.

This is not just about tech adoption. It's about rethinking influence, trust, and the very definition of leadership across generations.

Key Takeaways

- An understanding of the impact of agentic AI on multi-generational workplaces and how it shifts decision-making, autonomy, and communication across age groups
- Actionable strategies to blend generational strengths, from Gen Alpha's digital fluency to Boomers' experience, to build adaptive and inclusive cultures
- Perspective on how to lead through accelerated change, fostering cross-generational trust, upskilling at scale, and aligning people strategies with emerging AI capabilities

Recognition that Resonates: A Four-Year Journey of Relevance

Zoe Kasper & Jennifer Myers

Join Zoe Kasper, VP of Employee Experience, and Jennifer Myers, Senior Consultant of Employee Experience at Lincoln Financial to learn about their journey of launching and growing their employee recognition program – from its foundational purpose to its strategic role in shaping their employee value proposition. You will gain insight into why the program was launched, the core elements that make it work, and the common pitfalls they've successfully avoided along the way. Together, you'll explore how their approach has evolved in tandem with organizational changes, and how they're embedding recognition into the fabric of Lincoln Financials' culture. They will also highlight emerging trends observed and offer a look ahead at how they plan to continue innovating and amplifying the impact of recognition across the workforce.

Key Takeaways

- Reflect on the evolution of Lincoln Financials' recognition program over four years, understanding its origins, foundational design, and the strategic reasons for its launch.
- Analyze the key lessons learned and common pitfalls avoided, highlighting how proactive adjustments and thoughtful enhancements have sustained engagement and relevance
- Explore how the program has matured into a core element of Lincoln Financials' Employee Value Proposition (EVP), and examine future plans to scale, innovate, and deepen its impact across the organization.

Designing Recognition That Scales:

Real Stories from Organizations Getting It Right

Eliza Gohery, Erica Lied, Teisha Davis, Jaclyn Renner

For mid-sized and growing organizations, culture is shaped quickly and visibly. This panel brings together leaders from organizations that made a deliberate decision to introduce recognition as a way to strengthen connection, reinforce values, and guide their teams through change.

Panelists will share what prompted them to invest in recognition, how they approached getting it right from the start, and why embedding recognition into everyday leadership behaviors mattered more than one-off programs. Through real examples, the conversation will explore how recognition done right can create clarity, momentum, and meaningful impact across the organization, even with lean teams and limited resources.

Culture Repair in Action: How Leaders Rebuild Trust After Disruption

Julie Develin

Work has changed, and it's still changing. But just when does work, work?

We are navigating AI-enabled workflows, evolving expectations around flexibility and wellbeing, and steady performance pressure. On the surface, many organizations look stable. Underneath, trust may still be rebuilding or eroding. Clarity may still be uneven, and connection may feel thinner than it once did.

Culture repair today is not about returning to what was. It is about rising into what work has become.

Progress starts with understanding. Leaders need a clear view of how their people are experiencing work right now. We cannot do that through assumptions, or outdated playbooks. When leaders truly understand their workforce, they can make decisions that are grounded, transparent, and human.

AI Transformation Starts with People, So Should the Strategy: A Ravenna and Homebase Case Study

Cassidy Edwards & Kevin Coleman

People teams are being asked to do more than ever: support leaders through uncertainty, help organizations adapt to rapid change, and maintain a thriving culture as headcount grows. And now, AI is raising the stakes even further. The question isn't whether to adopt AI; it's how to do it in a way that elevates the employee experience and helps People Ops teams do more.

In this practical, insight-driven case study, Cassidy Edwards, Director of AI Enablement and HRBP at Homebase, and Kevin Coleman, Co-Founder of Ravenna, share how Homebase's People team became the engine driving company-wide AI acceleration.

You'll hear how Homebase uses Ravenna to put people's data, policies, and institutional knowledge directly in the hands of employees and leaders, right where they already work in Slack. From onboarding new "Homies" to navigating complex offboarding, AI Agents are reducing friction, speeding up answers, and freeing the People team to focus on what matters most: their people.

This session is designed for HR, People Ops, and business leaders who want honest, realistic strategies for leveraging AI to strengthen organizational effectiveness without losing the human touch.

Key Takeaways

- How a People team can lead (not just support) an organization's AI adoption strategy
- What it looks like to deploy AI Agents that answer employee questions, surface policies, and reduce operational load in real time
- Practical frameworks and lessons learned for navigating teams through change across the full employee lifecycle

Is Your EX Strategy Actually Ready? A Live Look at the StratEX Readiness Assessment

Kalifa Oliver

Employee experience is often treated as a feel-good initiative, yet it is a strategic business imperative. In this session, Dr. Kalifa Oliver, People Analytics Expert, Global Advisor, and Author, will demonstrate the StratEX Readiness Assessment and how HR leaders can quickly and clearly assess their organization's readiness to design and execute an effective EX strategy. You will see how StratEX moves EX conversations from opinions and assumptions to data-driven clarity, helping leaders focus time, energy, and resources where they matter most.

This session is idea for HR leaders who want to stop guessing and start building EX strategies that actually deliver impact.

Key Takeaways

- How the StratEX Readiness Assessment evaluates organizational readiness across key EX dimensions
- How readiness insights help HR leaders prioritize actions, investments, and interventions
- How to position EX as a strategic, measurable business capability rather than a nice-to-have

Workhuman's Global Barometer Research

Darcy Jacobsen & Isha Vicaria

Join us for a first look at Workhuman's flagship Humans at Work Global Barometer — a comprehensive research initiative examining the state of people and work in 2026.

Developed for senior HR and business leaders, this session unpacks our findings on the critical conditions shaping employee experience today. This new research surfaces signals on how

work is changing, where employees feel clarity and alignment, how AI is affecting confidence, capability and well-being, and how changes in growth, skills, and recognition are affecting companies and their humans.

In this session, survey insights will be layered with signals from Workhuman's client programs to illustrate where these trends are emerging in practice and their measurable impact on culture, leadership, and bottom-line impact. Participants will leave with a data-driven understanding of the trends defining the employee experience and practical takeaways they can apply immediately in their own workplaces.

Spark Talks

Amy Coleman, Anna Baird, Raúl Valentín

Our Spark Talks are three short, rapid-fire keynotes from industry leaders that ignite big ideas in just 10 minutes each. Story-driven and sharply focused, each talk delivers compelling insight with clarity and an authentic, crisp narrative. These sessions fuel energy, inspiration, and momentum—setting the tone for bold thinking, human-centered leadership, and meaningful connection.

To close, all three speakers come together for a dynamic group conversation that connects their ideas, deepens the core themes, and leaves attendees with a powerful, collective takeaway.

In this Spark Talks session, those perspectives converge around one of the most pressing leadership challenges of our time:

In a moment of unprecedented technological acceleration, organizations face a defining question: How do we design AI-enabled systems that make work more human, not less? This session offers leader-driven insight into the mindsets, values, and cultural shifts required to shape an AI future rooted in trust, connection, and human potential. Attendees will hear compelling perspectives on what it means to build human-centric workplaces in an era defined by technology—and why the choices leaders make now will determine the workplaces we create next.

A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama

A moderated conversation with Michelle Obama, Former First Lady, Bestselling Author, Champion of Authentic Leadership.

Thursday, April 30

Too Busy to Think?

How HR Leaders Reclaim Focus Without Adding More Work

Dorie Clark

HR professionals today operate under relentless pressure – navigating urgent employee needs, constant organizational and external change, and rising expectations with little space to step back and think. In this session, bestselling Harvard Business Review author Dorie Clark shares practical strategies to help HR leaders and practitioners reclaim mental bandwidth, sharpen strategic judgement, and move from constant reaction to intentional decision-making. Rather than adding more to your plate, this talk focuses on how to think differently within the constraints you already face – so you can anticipate challenges, make smarter tradeoffs, and create meaningful impact even in a fast-moving, complex environment.

Key Takeaways

- How to create thinking space without waiting for more time or resources
- How to spot early signals of change through smarter networks
- How to identify high-leverage priorities instead of trying to do everything
- How to make better strategic tradeoffs amid competing demands
- How to balance urgency with long-term impact through strategic patience

The Power of Beliefs:

Seven Core Beliefs that Drive Performance, Engagement & Purpose

Shawn Achor

The greatest predictor of future performance is the beliefs you hold about the world. Beliefs do more than shape the lens through which we see the world. They shape what happens next. Scientifically, beliefs don't just reflect reality. Beliefs bend reality. In this extraordinary new talk, world renowned researcher and New York Times bestselling author Shawn Achor illuminates how seven "core beliefs" change the math about what is possible and probable in our lives. And by changing the math, beliefs change our path.

Using stunning new research, Shawn reveals how these core beliefs take the cap off our potential or hold us down, enrich or impoverish us, heal us or they make us sicker. Drawing on two decades of research, as well as his work with NASA, the NFL and over a third of the Fortune 100 companies, Shawn outlines six strategies for undoing limiting beliefs and strengthening the empowering ones so we can help shape the lenses of others to improve performance, strengthen resilience and to create a better life and society.

Key Takeaways

- Understanding how beliefs predict our future outcomes
- The seven core beliefs that the most successful people and teams hold
- Six strategies for how to rewire limiting beliefs and strengthen empowering ones
- How leaders can intentionally cultivate positive core beliefs to create cultures where people thrive